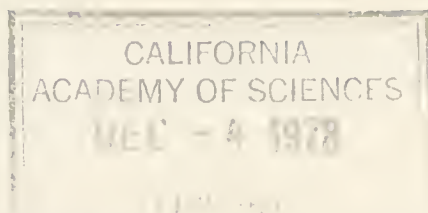


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the gull

Volume 60

Berkeley, Calif.

December 1978

Number 11

Oakland Christmas Bird Count - 1978

This month is the 79th annual Christmas Bird Count with the Oakland count being held, rain or shine, on Sunday, December 17. The Oakland count circle is the most thoroughly covered in the United States. We led the nation in 1977 with 233 participants (174 in the field in 64 parties; 49 feeder) going out on foot, by car, by boat and canoe. Our total of 175 species ranked 16th in the nation.

Last year we led the nation in the following species: Tufted Duck, Great Horned Owl, Common Flicker, Red-shafted Flicker (all-time national record), Steller's Jay, Scrub Jay, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Wrentit, Rufous-sided Towhee, Brown Towhee, Golden-crowned Sparrow and Fox Sparrow. We have excellent chances of leading the nation in these species again this year. Other common species in which we have led the nation in the past few years include Surf Scoter, Cooper's Hawk, Black-bellied Plover, Saw-whet Owl, Plain Titmouse, Common Bushtit, Bewick's Wren, Hermit Thrush and Hutton's Vireo.

Between now and December 17 there are a number of things you can do to prepare. When you have been assigned an area, start scouting it. Be especially watchful for the rarer birds that have been missed in the past but are usually present in the count circle every year. Check with your team leader for the species which could be expected in your area. Leaders will soon receive instructions by mail, if they haven't already.

If you have a feeder, be careful to keep it full and get to know the birds that frequent it. Often by noting distinctive individuals of a species and seeing how often they return you can get an idea of the number

of birds of each species which visit your feeder. All feeder participants will receive count forms in the mail.

The participation fee will be the same as last year — \$1.50 for all feeder and field participants.

After the count there will be soup and corn bread served at the Trinity United Methodist Church of Berkeley, located at the corner of Bancroft and Dana. The church entrance is at 2362 Bancroft. Parking will be ample. Food will begin being served at 5 p.m. and the species countdown will begin about 7 p.m. If the count day is rainy or muddy, we suggest that you bring a clean pair of shoes to wear in the church.

If you would like to participate in the count and did not receive a mailing or have never participated before, please contact Malcolm Sproul at 841-3086 to be assigned to a count team.

—MALCOLM SPROUL, Compiler

Other Christmas Bird Counts

Date	Count Name	Compiler/Contact	Telephone
12/16	Point Reyes	P.R.B.O.	(415) 868-1221
12/17	Putah Creek	Don Hallberg	(916) 756-1671
12/17	Santa Rosa	John Parmeter	(707) 255-6757
12/17	San Jose	Sue Kaiser	(408) 267-7268
12/21	Gray Lodge	Bruce Duell	(916) 695-2697
12/23	Hayward-Fremont	Treet Pelletier	(415) 881-0545
12/23	Clear Lake	James Matzinger	(707) 928-5376
12/28	Folsom Lake	Truman Holtzclaw	(916) 966-2917
12/30	Marin County	Phil Schaeffer	(415) 388-2524
12/30	Sacramento	Cecil Smith	(916) 966-5109
12/30	Contra Costa County	George Scheffel	(415) 687-7305
12/30	Crystal Springs	Peter Metropulos	(415) 591-9898
12/31	Western Sonoma	Betty Burridge	(707) 527-0225
12/31	Benicia	Frank Beyer	(707) 644-0236

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Field Trips Calendar

Wednesday, December 6 — Mini walk to **Jewel Lake**, Tilden Park. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the parking lot for the Nature Area. Winter residents, including Varied Thrush, Fox Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Golden-crowned Sparrows, are all back. Rain cancels trip. Leader: Ruth Voss (525-8032).

Saturday and Sunday, December 9 - 10 — **Sacramento and Gray Lodge Wildlife Refuges**. On **Saturday** meet at **9 a.m.** in parking lot #14 at Gray Lodge. Approach via Hwy. 99 and follow signs out of Live Oak or Gridley. On **Sunday** meet at Sacramento Refuge headquarters seven miles south of Willows at **9 a.m.** There is a state campground at Colusa. Driving time about three hours. Motels in Gridley are Markey's Motel (916) 846-3766 and Pacific Motel (916) 846-9915. Leaders: Dolores and Peter White (339-9234). (✓)

Thursday, December 14 — Mini trip to **Coyote Hills Regional Park**. Lesser Yellowlegs, White-tailed Kites and Burrowing Owls are usually seen. Take Hwy. 17 from the north or Dumbarton Bridge (Hwy. 84) from the west to Jarvis Ave. in Newark. Drive on Jarvis to Newark Blvd. and follow the signs to the park. Meet at **9 a.m.** at the first big parking lot on your left; there is a \$2 parking fee. Leader: Paul Covel (530-2513).

Pelagic Trip — GGAS will sponsor a trip leaving from Monterey Harbor Sunday, February 11. Past trips have produced Black-footed Albatross, Fulmar, Slender-billed Shearwater, Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Ancient Murrelet, Cassin's Auklet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Gray Whale, Pilot Whale, Dall Porpoise, White-sided Dolphin, California Sea Lion as well as other species. The boat will depart at **7:30 a.m.** and return around 3 p.m. The fare is \$15 per person. For reservations, please send a check payable to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2718 Telegraph Ave., #206, Berkeley, CA 94705. Details of the trip will be sent with an acknowledgement. (✓)

Carpooling: You can arrange carpooling for trips marked with a (✓). If you are not an enthusiast about driving or want a passenger or two to share expenses, please call Kate Partridge at work (642-5784, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.). Passengers should be willing to share all expenses incident to the trips including mileage and any fees that may arise.

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

October Observations

Through October 29

The September doldrums broke late in the month and the October vagrant landbirds proved to be probably the best of any October to date, outstanding for diversity and rarity, and with good abundance even without a report of the commoner vagrants from the Farallones. Although eclipsed by the landbirds, waterbirds also provided excitement.

TUBENOSES

The pelagic bird of the year was, for the third year out of four, a **Streaked Shearwater** in Monterey Bay. This third North American record was established Oct. 14 (AB,SCVAS). Single **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** were found in Monterey Bay Oct. 8 (GGAS), Oct. 14 (AB) and Oct. 29 (RS). **Buller's (New Zealand) Shearwaters**, scarce earlier in the fall, strangely were numerous Oct. 29 (SL). A good flight of **Manx Shearwaters** visited Monterey Bay, beginning with one on Oct. 7 (AB) and four the following day (GGAS). By Oct. 16 there were about 150, with some still present Oct. 29 (RS). Oct. 29 also marked the first fall detection of **Northern Fulmars** (RS). One **Black-footed Albatross** remained in Monterey Bay through Sept. 30 (WFO). The elusive **Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel** appeared at the Farallones Sept. 28 (PRBO). Monterey Bay visitors on Sept. 30 included a **Least Storm-Petrel** (BDP) from western Mexico and a **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** (WFO) from the sub-Antarctic. Other sightings of single **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** there occurred Oct. 2 (PA, SFB, BH) and Oct. 29 (RS) and two were found Oct. 14 (SCVAS, LAAS).

DUCKS AND MARSHBIRDS

Marin County's first **White-faced Ibis** flew north across **Drakes Estero** Oct. 12 (RS). The earliest **Blue-winged Teal** reported were two at the **Watsonville Sewage Ponds** Oct. 1 (JL). Similarly, the vanguard **Eurasian Wigeon** was in **Golden Gate Park** (G.G. Park) by Oct. 18 (DEd). **Crespi Pond**, **Pacific Grove**, hosted a vagrant **Black Rail** Sept. 30 (HB).

SHOREBIRDS

Only two **American Golden Plovers** were reported after the initial September burst: **Nuncs Ranch** Sept. 24-Oct. 6 (mob) and the mouth of the **Salinas River** Oct. 22 (EM). Good numbers of **Pectoral Sandpipers** stopped at the expected coastal locations, for durations from minutes to weeks. A most cooperative **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** inhabited the mouth of the **Carmel River** Oct. 14 (RS) through Oct. 28 (DR, mob). Conversely, a **Ruff** at **Moss Landing** was seen only Oct. 6 (BPu). A **Rock Sandpiper** at the southern limit of its normal range, **Pt. Pinos**,

Pacific Grove, Oct. 27 was very early (SFB). To complete the chronicle of the August-September invasion of **Buff-breasted Sandpipers**, the Farallones received their first two on Aug. 29 (PRBO).

JAEGERS AND ALCIDS

The highly-pelagic **Long-tailed Jaeger** was found in Monterey Bay Oct. 1 (MDAS) and Oct. 7 (AB). The most tropical of alcids, **Craveri's Murrelet**, was identified at Moss Landing Oct. 7 (S&SS, *et al.*) and refound nearby Oct. 15 (MH, DS-H). Three other **Craveri's Murrelets** rode Monterey Bay Oct. 29, the latest Northern California record (RS). An Ancient Murrelet there Oct. 7 was early (AB). A Tufted Puffin, rare south of the Farallones, enlivened Monterey Bay Sept. 30 (JL) and Oct. 2 (SFB).

LANDBIRDS

A migrant Broad-winged Hawk finally was seen at Point Diablo Sept. 27 (EM) and two more passed Oct. 7 (SW). An immature Broad-winged Hawk arrived at the mouth of the Carmel River Oct. 27 (SFB) and was joined by an adult the following day (DR, mob). Both were still present Oct. 29 (JP). The late date (Sept. 30) and coastal location (Lake Merced) of the only Yellow-billed Cuckoo (DEd) suggest that it belonged to the eastern race. An immature male Costa's Hummingbird remained at Middle Lake, G.G. Park, Sept. 19 (PM) through Oct. 2 (BF) and perhaps the same individual was there Oct. 7 (PG, BH). An adult male Costa's Hummingbird investigated a residential area of San Francisco Oct. 2 (BF, *et al.*). The small irruption of Acorn and Lewis' Woodpeckers continues. Six of the latter were present in Orinda Oct. 27 (DMi). The Red-naped ("Yellow-bellied" - *nuchalis*) Sapsucker at Nunes Ranch Oct. 1 (JM) was closer to home than are most Point Reyes vagrants.

Three Tropical Kingbirds appeared: near North Point Reyes Beach Sept. 27 (BJ) through Oct. 1 (BPo), Laguna Ranch, Point Reyes, Sept. 30 (BPo), and Middle Lake, G.G. Park, Oct. 13 (AH). Northern California's tenth **Great Crested Flycatcher** found the Farallon Islands Oct. 9 (PRBO). A Yellow-billed Magpie at Rodeo Lagoon Oct. 21 (VD, SFB) showed no signs of cage wear, but vagrant magpies are often suspected of having been illegally imprisoned. The berry-eating Townsend's Solitaire occasionally straggles coastward. One was "swished" out of mistletoes along Mines Road, Alameda County, Oct. 22 (SFB).

A **Red-Throated Pipit** visiting the Mendoza Ranch pond only briefly on Sept. 30 (RS) constituted the second published Northern California record. Following the discovery of two more **Red-Throated Pipits** in the field south of the Hall Ranch Oct. 7 (RS, JM), pipits became more popular (or unpopular if you couldn't find them). Thereafter many

observers saw one or two on many days through Oct. 24, with a single seen through Oct. 29 (BH, BR). Plumage differences indicated that at least four individuals were sighted during this period.

As exciting as the pipits was Northern California's first (and the state's ninth) **Yellow-green Vireo** at Lake Merced, San Francisco, found Oct. 22 (DEd) and seen by many through Oct. 25. This striking species is very difficult to find anywhere in the United States. After so many in September, only one Red-eyed Vireo appeared: Fish Docks Oct. 21 (JMcG, LD).

At least 121 individual vagrant warblers of 22 species were reported on the mainland alone! Four Black-and-white Warblers searched bark in our area. One was at the beginning of Limantour Road Oct. 1 (DMcC, KY) and three at the mouth of the Carmel River: Oct. 1 (AS), Oct. 22-29 (EM, mob), and Oct. 27-28 (SFB, BE). Due to the lack of undergrowth, the **Worm-eating Warbler** at Mendoza Ranch Oct. 5-8 (KY, mob) was much more visible than the one in Tilden Park last summer. The Point Reyes bird was number 24 for California and relatively few have been in our half of the state. Ten Tennessee Warblers represented a considerable improvement over September:

1 Carmel River Mouth	Oct. 1	AS
1 Mendoza Ranch	Oct. 6	JM
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 12	RS
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 14-19	JP, BDP, LCB
1 Fish Docks	Oct. 21	JS+
1 Carmel River Mouth	Oct. 22	EM, SW
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 24	
1 Delaveaga Dell, G.G. Park	Oct. 24	DEd
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 28	BDP
1 Strawberry Hill, G.G. Park	Oct. 28	DEd

Our only Virginia's Warbler stayed at Middle Lake, G.G. Park, Oct. 8 (PG, BH) through Oct. 11 (LCB). The Northern Parula on the Farallones Oct. 6 (PRBO) was matched by another on the mainland at Nearys Lagoon, Santa Cruz, Oct. 23 (SG).

The showing of Magnolia and Cape May Warblers was only average to poor, but Black-throated Blue and Blackburnian Warblers were exceptionally numerous. Two Magnolia Warblers appeared at Mendoza Ranch Oct. 12 (NC, RS) and at the Point Reyes Lighthouse trees Oct. 26 (GK). An immature male at Five Brooks, Marin County, Sept. 30 (RS) was the only Cape May Warbler reported. Our seven Black-throated Blue Warblers were found as follows:

1 Crespi Pond	Sept. 29	SH, JH
1 Drakes Beach	Oct. 9	EM
1 Middle Lake, G.G. Park	Oct. 15-19	DEd, DEl, DMu
1 Bodega Bay	Oct. 19	DEl, JM, et al.
1 lagoon below Hall Ranch	Oct. 19	EC
1 Fish Docks	Oct. 20	AG, JM
1 Lighthouse	Oct. 27	DEr, RS

A **Black-throated Green Warbler** cruised the north mouth of the Carmel River Oct. 22 (EM) through Oct. 29 (JP, mob). A small aqua-green and dull yellow *Dendroica* flitting tamely through thin lupines beside the old schoolhouse on Point Reyes Oct. 15-16 (AF) was identified as California's fifth **Cerulean Warbler**, an immature female (JL, JW, SFB, mob). Don Roberson has said that this bird epitomizes the search for eastern vagrants by California birders. It certainly did this fall! Two weeks later another immature female **Cerulean Warbler** at the mouth of the Carmel River Oct. 27 (SFB, VD) was already the state's seventh, the sixth having been seen at San Diego in the interim! Our nine Blackburnian Warblers were all at prime coastal vagrant traps:

1 El Carmelo Cemetery, Pacific Grove	Oct. 4	EM
1 Lighthouse	Oct. 6	DDeS
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 8	CB, <i>fide</i> PS
1 Lighthouse	Oct. 8-11	mob
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 13	AG, JM
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 17-22	mob
1 Carmel River Mouth	Oct. 22	EM, DMO
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 27	DEr, RS
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 28-29	LCB, BDP, mob

Perhaps the suspected population growth of the Cape May Warbler allowed increased reproductive success in the Blackburnian Warbler through density compensation. If so, we should expect an inverse relationship between the numbers of these two vagrants, correcting for the overall abundance of vagrant warblers each fall. Likewise on the outer coast were our six Chestnut-sided Warblers:

1 Crespi Pond, Pacific Grove	Sept. 29	SH, JH
2 Lighthouse	Oct. 6	SFB, AG, WG
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 6	SFB, <i>et al.</i>
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 14-19	JP, BDP, LCB
1 Mendoza Ranch	Oct. 22	RS, <i>et al.</i>

Birders found two Bay-breasted Warblers: Fish Docks Sept. 30 (RS) and Pioneer Log Cabin, G.G. Park, Oct. 26-28 (DEd). Only 13 Black-poll Warblers were reported, not as many as one would expect on the mainland during such a fine October:

1 Crespi Pond, Pacific Grove	Oct. 1	DEr
1 Drakes Beach	Oct. 1	EM
1 Lighthouse	Oct. 6	EM
1 Mendoza Ranch	Oct. 9	DP
1 Fish Docks	Oct. 9	BPu
1 Mendoza Ranch	Oct. 14	BDP, LCB, JP
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 15	BF, JR, <i>et al.</i>
1 Pioneer Log Cabin, G.G. Park	Oct. 20	DEd
1 Battery Wallace, G.G.N.R.A.	Oct. 21	SFB
1 Mendoza Ranch	Oct. 22	mob
1 Lake Merced, S.F.	Oct. 24	SFB
1 Nearys Lagoon, Santa Cruz	Oct. 27	DSc
1 Mallard Lake, G.G. Park	Oct. 28	DEd

Add two more Point Reyes Prairie Warblers: another near Nunes Ranch Sept. 30 (RS) and one at the Fish Docks Oct. 19 (EC). Palm Warblers represented themselves well on the mainland, with 21 on Point Reyes, 2 farther inland at Five Brooks, Marin County, Oct. 15 (BPo), 14 in the Monterey area, 4 in San Francisco and one at Princeton Harbor, San Mateo County, for a total of 42. The high count was eight at Point Pinos Oct. 13 (SH, JH).

An Ovenbird stopped at the Nunes Ranch Oct. 2 (EM) and another followed at the Fish Docks Oct. 6 (DDeS). The only Northern Water-thrush stayed at Bodega Bay Oct. 18-22 (DEl, *et al.*). The **Connecticut Warbler** is not only very rare in California but also especially elusive, most individuals remaining no more than one day. Observers found three: Farallones Oct. 5-6 (PRBO), Pacific Grove Oct. 2-6 (MN, BE), and Nearys Lagoon, Santa Cruz, Oct. 22 (DP, RM). This fall produced one **Hooded Warbler**, a male at the Fish Docks Sept. 30 (EG, mob). **Canada Warbler** was another rare warbler with three October sightings: Farallones Oct. 5 (PRBO), San Francisco Oct. 5-6 (DMcC), and Pacific Grove Oct. 14-15 (RS, JM). Six American Redstarts continued their species' rather poor showing:

1 Lighthouse	Oct. 5	EM
1 Strawberry Hill, G.G. Park	Oct. 9	DEd
1 Carmel River Mouth	Oct. 14-22	EM, <i>et al.</i>
1 Pioneer Log Cabin, G.G. Park	Oct. 20	DEd
1 Carmel River Mouth	Oct. 22-27	EM, <i>et al.</i>
1 Carmel River Mouth	Oct. 22-29	EM, mob

Three Bobolinks parted our grass: Crespi Pond, Pacific Grove, Sept. 30-Oct. 2 (DEr, *et al.*) and Oct. 4 (EM) and Bolinas Oct. 25-26 (RS). An Orchard Oriole remained at Middle Lake, G.G. Park, Oct. 2 (PM) through Oct. 9 (DEd, but the other two were seen one day only: Oct. 22 at Crespi Pond (EM) and Oct. 28 at Nunes Ranch (LCB, mob). With the latter that day there were both "Baltimore" and "Bullock's" Northern Orioles (LCB, BDP). For the record, the **Great-tailed Grackle** was still at Aquatic Park, San Francisco, through Sept. 20 (DEd). Single Summer Tanagers were found at Greenwood Park, Pacific Grove, Oct. 1 (JL) and in willows along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, inner Point Reyes, Oct. 27-29 (RS, mob).

Our October Rose-breasted Grosbeak occurred at the Point Reyes Lighthouse on the eleventh (JSh). Two days earlier a rare coastal Green-tailed Towhee had dropped in (DT). The Vesper Sparrow at Nunes Ranch Oct. 27 (RS) was also unusual on the coast. A bird there the next two days began this season's reports of "Slate-colored" Dark-eyed Juncos (BDP, LCB, *et al.*). Fall vagrant Tree Sparrows typically stay one day. Our two fit this pattern: Middle Lake, G.G. Park, Oct. 10 (early-DEd) and the Lighthouse parking lot Oct. 28 (LCB, BDP). Bay

Area birders continue to identify more Clay-colored Sparrows, seven this month on the mainland:

1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 8	PM, DP
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 11	AG, WG
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 14	LCB
1 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 21	SW
1 Nearys Lagoon, Santa Cruz	Oct. 24	SG
2 Nunes Ranch	Oct. 28 (1 on Oct. 27, 29)	DEr, RS, LCB, BDP, mob

Six White-throated Sparrows appeared:

1 Battery Wallace	Oct. 12	MLR
1 Nunes Ranch (immature)	Oct. 13	PL
1 Nunes Ranch (adult)	Oct. 14	JP, LCB, BDP
1 Lake Merced, S.F.	Oct. 19	DEd
2 Carmel River Mouth	Oct. 23	JM

The first three Swamp Sparrows were all found Oct. 28: Olema Marsh (BDP), Lincoln Park, San Francisco, (JM), and the mouth of the Carmel River (DR, mob).

In conjunction with the Red-throated Pipits, "Longspur (Sunday Afternoon) Fever" was unprecedented. First to be found were five Laplands in the fields south of the Hall Ranch Oct. 1 (DMo, GM). After a count of seven on Oct. 6 (SFB), lower numbers were reported through Oct. 29 (5-SFB). Chestnut-collareds appeared starting with two on Oct. 13 (JM) and increased to five Oct. 29 (SFB). Meanwhile, another longspur field was discovered 0.6 mile southwest of the Spaletta Ranch. Initial estimates were twelve Laplands and seven Chestnut-collareds on Oct. 18 (DSh, PH) and fifteen and ten respectively on Oct. 20 (JM), and numbers remained in this range through Oct. 28 (mob). The intense excitement was generated with the discovery that a strange longspur found Oct. 15 (AE, *et al.*) was the first coastal Northern California record of **McCown's Longspur** (JM, EC). This individual or (as some observers have suggested) another one was seen intermittently through the end of the period (SFB, DEr, mob).

Erratum: The Sept. 24 Black-throated Green Warbler at Rodeo Lagoon should be credited to Doug Morton (DMo), not Dan Murphy (DMu).

Observers: Peter Allen, Stephen F. Bailey, Alan Baldrige, Laurence C. Binford, Tony Briggs, Hank Brodtkin, Courtney Buchert, Eric Caine, Nancy Conzett, Mary Ann Danielson, Dave DeSante, Linda Doerflinger, Vickie Dziadosz, Art Edwards, David Edwards (DEd), Bruce Elliot, Doug Ellis (DEl), Dick Erickson (DEr), Ann Follis, Bud Fry, Steve Getty, Al Ghiorso, Wilma Ghiorso, Golden Gate Audubon Society, Phil Gordon, Ed Greaves, Michael Harer, Dea Harper, Jay Harrison, Sidney Harrison, Phil Henderson, Bob Hirt, Alan Hopkins, Gary Key, Jeri Langham, Phil Lenna, Los Angeles Audubon Society, Susanne Luther,

Eugene Makishima, many observers (mob), Diane McClung, Joe McGee, Peter Metropulos, Dee Mitchell (DMi), Randy Morgan, Joe Morlan, Doug Morton (DMo), Greg Morton, Mount Diablo Audubon Society, Dan Murphy (DMu), Margo Nelson, Dennis Parker, B.D. Parmeter, John Parmeter, Peter Paton, Point Reyes Bird Observatory (Farallon report thanks to Jules Evens, Peter Paton and Steve Morrell), Bill Porteous (BPo), Bill Pursell (BPu), Bob Richmond, Jean Richmond, Don Roberson, Mary Louise Rosegay, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society, Phil Schaeffer, Don Schmoldt (DSc), John Shipman (JSh), Dave Shuford (DSh), Stephanie and Stephen Singer, Arnold Small, Rich Stallcup, Doreen Stebbins-Harer, John Sterling (JSt), Dorothy Tobkin, Western Field Ornithologists, Steve Wilson, Jon Winter, Keiko Yamane.

—STEPHEN F. BAILEY, *Observations Editor*
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Berkeley, CA 94720 (548-9507)

Conservation Notes

ALASKA LANDS BILL FAILS. There will be no Alaska lands bill this year.

The measure never made it to the Senate floor, due mostly to the delaying tactics and filibuster threats from Alaska's senators, Ted Stevens and Mike Gravel. (The House had already passed a strong version of the bill in May.) The Carter administration has indicated it will take some sort of interim executive action to protect these vast federal lands, our country's last great unspoiled wilderness. The law protecting much of Alaska from exploitation and development expires on December 18.

Next year, the 96th Congress will again address itself to America's greatest conservation decision.

CALIFORNIA OFFSHORE OIL. The Interior Department has moved boundaries for proposed oil leases from three to six miles offshore, but Secretary Andrus has refused to abandon or postpone plans for lease sales off the California coast, now set for 1981. The next step in the process will be federally funded studies of the social, economic and environmental impact of coastal oil-development, including public hearings. It looks as if the very real threat to marine and coastal environments of a massive oilspill or blowout — not to mention the effect of onshore oil facilities — will be accepted once again in the search for new sources of petroleum.

CAPTIVE CONDOR PROGRAM RECOMMENDED. Things are looking worse for the California Condor. Their environment is being rapidly diminished by development and other pressures and at the

state survey in mid-October, where coverage of the habitat by observers was thorough, only 18 of the big birds were spotted. Also, there has been no confirmed sightings so far of the long rumored and hoped-for Baja colony.

An extensive captive propagation program to provide a viable population and thus preserve the species has recently been recommended by a panel of scientists, appointed by National Audubon and the American Ornithologists Union. A copy of their "Condor Advisory Report" is available for reading at the GGAS office.

BLM'S WILDERNESS INVENTORY. The BLM has released its Draft Wilderness Inventory Map for the California Desert Conservation Area, a great chunk of the southern part of our state. The map shows a 336 million acre "conservation area" that is being considered for Wilderness designation. A public review and comment period continuing until January 31, 1979, includes ten public meetings throughout the state. The closest to the Bay Area will be Monday, December 4, in Sacramento at the Resources Building, 1416 Ninth St. The Inventory Map may be seen at the GGAS office.

GOLDEN GATE PARK MASTER PLAN. Also, closer to home, the Golden Gate Park Master Planners have finished their second draft of the GGMP, and it will be out sometime this month. It promises to be a good one. All interested parties are invited to attend the public hearings on the second draft — this is the time for critical comment — now scheduled for sometime in January in San Francisco.

BALD EAGLE COUNT. The National Wildlife Federation is conducting a nationwide one-day midwinter Bald Eagle count on Saturday, January 20, 1979. The census will hopefully provide an index to the number of eagles wintering in the 48 contiguous states and will identify important wintering areas. Anyone interested in participating in the count should contact the Raptor Info. Center, 1412 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

BAJA GRAY WHALES. The Mexican government recently announced a ban on commercial whale-watching boats off the west coast of Baja. This is good. It is a further step in preserving a species, the California Gray Whale, once considered almost extinct. However, the real threat to the Gray Whale is not the boats but the potential gas and oil development of the Gulf of California, particularly the area where the creatures mate and calf. This is a decision the Mexican president, Jose Lopez Portillo, must make soon.

The Whale Center at 3929 Piedmont Ave., Oakland, which aims to increase appreciation for whales and their dilemma, is in need of volunteers. Please contact Maxine McCloskey at 654-4892 if you would

like to help. The center has many beautiful whale gifts and items. It also sells gift certificates and all purchases help to save the whales.

—CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Mono Lake Crisis

Evidence that coyotes and other predators have crossed the newly exposed land bridge to Negit Island on Mono Lake, jeopardizing the survival of the largest nesting colony of gulls in the world, was discovered on October 11 by Bureau of Land Management biologist Joe Capodice.

Since 1941 when Los Angeles began diverting water from the streams that feed land-locked Mono Lake, the water level of the lake has been dropping steadily. It has finally come down to the crucial level that may mean death for the lake and with that its ability to provide life for the thousands of birds that depend on it for nesting and feeding.

(For more information see the September *Gull* for an article by David Gaines, "*Birdlife at Mono Lake: Its Uncertain Future.*")

The death of Mono Lake will be an ecological and environmental disaster of major proportions. The gulls are the tip of the iceberg. Millions of other birds dependent on the lake have nowhere else to go. Clouds of alkali dust will be swept from the exposed lakebottom into the eastern Sierran atmosphere, polluting the air and jeopardizing the health of plants, animals and humans far from Mono's shores. A grand and haunting landscape of national park stature will be lost forever.

If water diversions can be regulated to stabilize the level of the lake at 6,878 feet the lake can live and the gulls' nesting grounds will be protected. It is toward this end that the Mono Lake Committee, P.O. Box 2764, Oakland, CA 94602, is working.

They urge that personal letters be written to Edward L. Hastey, State Director, Bureau of Land Management, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825, emphasizing the urgency of the present crisis and expressing why you feel Mono Lake and Negit Island should be protected.

Birding the Delta

Whistling Swans and Sandhill Cranes

Among the special attractions of San Joaquin County are the thousands of wintering Whistling Swans and Sandhill Cranes — a spectacle one can see in few other places. Huge numbers of Whistling Swans are traditionally found on Victoria Island along Hwy. 4, just after crossing into San Joaquin County from Contra Costa County. Take Hwy. 4 east

from Hwy 680 and head toward Stockton. The swans may be in the fields along Hwy. 4, but you may be able to get a better view from a side road. Look for large white lumps in the field as you drive. It is among these flocks of swans that one to three Bewick's Swan (a European species that may be lumped with the Whistling Swan) have been found by carefully scoping. Look for a swan with a large amount of yellow on the bill. The swans generally arrive by late November and leave at the end of January.

Several thousand Sandhill Cranes traditionally winter in the Thornton area, N.E. of Victoria Island. Continue east on Hwy. 4, north on Hwy. 5, east on Hammer Lane and north on Hwy. J8 (Thornton Rd.). Turn west on Woodbridge Rd. just north of the intersection of Hwy. J8 and Hwy. 12 and drive this road slowly. A scope is helpful for close viewing. The cranes arrive in late November and leave in mid-February. If you plan your trip in early February you will be rewarded with sights of these majestic birds performing courtship dances. Victor Rd., south of Woodbridge off Hwy. J8, can also be good for viewing the cranes.

In addition to the cranes and swans you will no doubt see many ducks, geese and raptors. A good way to return to the Bay Area is via Hwy. 12, with a stop at Grizzly Island Waterfowl Management Area (take Grizzly Island Rd. near Fairfield). This is an excellent area for wintering waterfowl and such raptors as Rough-legged, Ferruginous and Red-tailed Hawks. A Northern Shrike sometimes winters, so check every shrike carefully. The Delta, with its marshes, waterways and rich agricultural land, is certain to provide the city dweller with a delightful day of birding.

—SUSANNE LUTHER

reprinted from *Western Tanager*

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Birding the Delta by Canoe

Phil Gordon and the staff of the Alexander Lindsay Junior Museum of Walnut Creek will lead a birding by canoe trip to Little Frank's Tract on December 3, 1978.

This small state park and sanctuary contains many interlocking ponds and channels. Waterfowl at this time of year should be plentiful. Resident muskrats, otter and beaver plus populations of Black-crowned Night Heron, rail and marsh wren add to the species typically seen.

The museum furnishes canoes, paddles and leaders and helps everyone learn the art of paddling a canoe.

The fee is \$10; limit 25 people. Register soon as the trip should fill rapidly. Drop by the museum, 1901 First Ave., Walnut Creek, or mail your registration to the same address.

Anyone for Madagascar and Tanzania?

GGAS is sponsoring a trip to Madagascar and Tanzania July 22 – August 10, 1979. It was first announced in the September *Gull* as being in the planning stages; details are now complete.

This will be a spectacular three-week wildlife tour to two areas of Africa that are not yet completely destroyed by man's developments.

In Tanzania we will visit Dar es Salaam, the Selous Game Reserve and stay four or five days at the Rufiji Tented Camp.

On Madagascar we will visit three different lifezones. This island is home to nearly 100 species of birds and other animal life, especially lemurs, which are found nowhere else on earth. This alone should make the trip worthwhile.

This tour is for those seriously interested in wildlife who don't mind a little extra effort to view the birds and animals. The group is limited to 12 people and will cost between \$3000 and \$3500, depending on changing air rates. An optional fourth week can be arranged to visit Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Lake Manyara and other areas.

Leaders will be Don Turner, a resident of Kenya and an outstanding authority on the birds of Africa, and Mike Wihler, an employee of the San Francisco Zoo for the past dozen years and a well-known leader of past GGAS trips.

For more information contact Mike Wihler at 664-6567 in San Francisco or Forum Travel at 843-8294 in Berkeley.

—EXTENDED FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

Owl Symposium Scheduled for January

The third annual symposium to be presented by the National Audubon Society's Western Education Center will be entitled "Owls of the West; Their Ecology and Conservation."

This year's day-long program will be held in the Morrison Auditorium of the California Academy of Science, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, on Saturday, January 20, from 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Discussion will center on the special problems, particularly those of habitat loss, that concern the future of so many of the western populations of these unique birds.

Admission will be by advance registration only. For tickets, mail a self-addressed, stamped envelope and your check made payable to National Audubon Society for \$3.50 per person to OWLS, Western Education Center, National Audubon Society, 376 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, CA 94920.

For further information, use the same address or call (415) 388-2524.

OFFICE NOTES

Slide Library

A new addition to the GGAS office is the recently compiled Slide Library, which currently contains 250 slides of California birds. We hope to continue adding to it as good photographs are taken in the future. The slides will be available for use by GGAS members, teachers and speakers. A deposit will be required if slides are checked out of the office. Call Vera Paraschak at the office (843-2222) for more information. If you have good slides that you could duplicate and donate to fill out gaps in our inventory, please call Nancy Konzett at 527-2593.

Warm Bodies Needed

GGAS needs people from San Francisco to serve on the following committees: Conservation, Program and Hospitality. If you are interested in any of these committees please contact the GGAS office (843-2222).

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Send address changes to office promptly; Post Office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$18 per year (individual); \$21 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$4 per year; single issues 40¢. High school and college student membership \$13.50 per year. Senior citizen individual, \$13.50, senior citizen family, \$15.50.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

***The Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month.**